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ANNEX I

Guidelines for Change of Command Ceremonies

The following guidelines are provided as a reference aid:

DATE AND TIME

The officer being relieved should establish the date for the change of command subject to the concurrence of the relief and his immediate superiors. The change of command should generally not be scheduled for Saturday afternoons, Sundays, or national holidays.

The time for the ceremony should be one which will be convenient for guests, and also will give the host ship time to make the many preparations. Normally, the change of command can be best scheduled to commence between 0945 and 1100.

Invitations. The preparations and mailing of invitations is the responsibility of the officer being relieved. The officer is also responsible for ensuring that invitations are sent to the "official family," which includes Commanders, Commanding Officers, Chief of Staff, Chief Staff Officers, etc., of all local units and activities, as he/she knows better than his/her relief. Inasmuch as the invitations should be mailed two to three weeks before the ceremony, the relieving officer should forward his/her guest list in ample time. The officer being relieved should screen this list to eliminate duplication.

A pre-addressed postcard or an envelope with a card should accompany the invitations to facilitate the R.S.V.P. Consideration should also be given to enclosing gate passes, parking permits, and boat schedules, if applicable.

If inclement weather would necessitate a shift in location or time of ceremony, a card with these details should be prepared and enclosed.

The command should keep an accurate and up-to-date list of acceptances and regrets as they are received. Numbering R.S.V.P. cards is helpful as some invited guests will not print or write their names clearly.

CHANGE OF COMMAND MESSAGE

At least a week in advance of the ceremony, a message announcing the change of command should be sent to the Senior Officer Present Afloat (SOPA).

The SOPA message is customarily used to invite interested fleet officers and their spouses to the change of command. An example of a typical change of command message follows:

"1. LCDR A. B. SEA, USN, WILL BE RELIEVED AS COMMANDING OFFICER, USS NEVERSAIL (YZ 0000) BY LCDR W. T. DOOR, USN, IN CHANGE OF COMMAND CEREMONIES 1000, 5 OCT 98 AT PIER 4, NAVSTA, SDIEGO.

2. ALL INTERESTED PERSONNEL AND THEIR SPOUSES ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND. UNIFORM FOR ATTENDEES IS AS FOLLOWS:

OFFICERS – (Specify)
ENLISTED – (Specify)
CIVILIANS – (Specify)

3. REQ SOPA ADMIN SAN DIEGO PASS TO ALL SHIPS PRESENT SAN DIEGO. REQ COMELEVEN PASS TO ALL SHORE ACTIVITIES SAN DIEGO AREA.”

PROGRAMS

Programs for the occasion are not only helpful for the guests, but often serve as souvenirs of this memorable event. Print shops are available for printing change of command programs. Under normal circumstances, allow at least 10 working days for preparation of the programs.

Inclusion of the following items is desirable:

- a. Command insignia, and/or good picture of ship or command.
- b. List of official party and their titles.
- c. Schedule of events for the ceremony. The schedule of events should be detailed enough to provide guidance for civilian guests who may not be familiar with the customs and courtesies of the military. Make a note on the program as to when guests will be expected to rise and be seated.
- d. Brief biography and photograph of the Commander/Commanding Officer and the Prospective Commander/Commanding Officer. A biography and photograph of the guest speaker may also be included, if desired.
- e. List of previous commanders/commanding officers, with dates of command.
- f. A summary history of the ship or command may be included, if desired.

PARTICIPATION OF SENIORS

Since the change of command ceremony is an event conducted by and in the interests of the two officers concerned and in view of the limited space available in most cases, a maximum of two seniors (the immediate superior in command and one other) is recommended for participation with one being the norm. The guest speaker (senior participant) should be invited to speak as far in advance as possible. A written invitation to the senior participant and guest speakers is appropriate.

BANDS

If at all possible, make arrangements for a band. A band's presence permits the proper rendering of honors to flag officers and adds zest and a military atmosphere to the entire proceedings. Requests should be made in writing for record purposes.

REHEARSAL

A complicated change of command ceremony requires a complete rehearsal (less the principals) the day before the ceremony. A rehearsal precludes awkward situations and serves to

alert those involved to flaws in their planning. The lectern, public address system, chairs for the principals, and other miscellaneous hardware should be in place and the equipment operating for the rehearsal so that, adequacy, positioning, spacing, etc., can be checked on the spot. The more attention paid to details at the rehearsal, the more nearly flawless will be the actual ceremony.

FOUL WEATHER PLAN

Have a complete and rehearsed, foul weather plan for quick implementation, if needed.

CHANGE OF COMMAND NOTICE

Prior to the ceremony, commands should issue a change of command notice. This notice should have as its enclosures, the following:

- a. Schedule of events (fair weather).
- b. Diagram of ceremonial area (fair weather).
- c. Schedule of events (foul weather).
- d. Diagram of ceremonial area (foul weather).
- e. Detailed list of services and equipment desired.

INFORMING NEARBY SHIPS

Ensure that nearby ships, especially any ship along-side, are kept informed of your plans. Don't hesitate to let them know what you expect of them by way of cooperation in making your ceremony a success. Request that ships in the area use MC systems topside during ceremony only in emergency.

TRAFFIC CONTROL

Coordinate with adjacent or host activities to work out any traffic control problems anticipated.

PARKING

Make arrangements for adequate parking near the ship so as to preclude long walks for guests. Care should be taken, however, to ensure that official cars park sufficiently clear of the brow or ceremonial area to maintain a clear path for subsequent arrivals.

USHERS/USHERETTES

Junior officers should serve as ushers/usherettes for all guests and unescorted ladies. Ushers/usherettes should be lined up in a military fashion awaiting their turn. Designate an officer to be in charge of the ushers/usherettes, and make him/her responsible to see that all guests are properly escorted. Each usher/usherette should know those for whom reserved seats have been designated. When escorting a lady, a male usher should offer his right arm since swords are often worn.

THE CEREMONIAL AREA

The area should be laid out so that the guests have a good view of the platform or area where the ceremony will take place. The principals should be centrally located. If possible, they should be seated on a raised platform so as to be in full view of the audience. Two lecterns should be placed on the platform with well checked out microphones and sound amplifying system. Having a separate lectern and microphone for the Master of Ceremonies provides one of the most important "secrets" to flawlessly executing a change of command ceremony. The principals seated on the platform are: the officer being relieved, his/her relief, the participating senior, guest speaker, and chaplain. The Master of Ceremonies may also be located on the platform, but off to the side. Using the departing officer as the host figure, follow the customary alternating pattern of senior man to host's right, second senior to his left, etc. Chairs should be located so that none of the principals are hidden by the lecterns. Guest seating should include reserved marked seats for the incumbent Commander/Commanding Officer's family, the relieving Commander/Commanding Officer's family, and guests of honor or their family. An aisle is recommended with the relieving officer's family on the left side. The spouse of the ranking guest should be seated next to the spouse of the officer being relieved or immediately behind depending on the number of vacancies on the front row.

THE CEREMONY

Normally, the program of events should be as follows:

1. Upon arrival of the senior participants, the Master of Ceremonies calls the crew(s) to attention and asks all guests to rise.

Members of the official party arrive in inverse order of precedence with the senior entering last, except that the relieved officer will generally precede the relieving officer, although the latter may be junior. Upon arrival at an activity with a saluting battery, all members of the official party who are entitled to honors will receive full honors less gun salute except for the senior official, whether military or civilian, who is accorded full honors.

After receiving honors, members of the official party sometimes gather at a designated point to greet members of the party as they arrive. They then proceed to their seats on the platform. An acceptable alternate calls for officers of the command to meet and escort members of the ceremonial party to their seats upon conclusion of their personal honors. As a general rule, arrival and departure honors will not be rendered to guests at a change of command ceremony.

2. National Anthem.
3. Invocation (Master of Ceremonies requests all military personnel remain covered).
4. Master of Ceremonies requests all guests to be seated.
5. Remarks by senior officer.
6. Presentation of award (if appropriate)
7. Remarks and reading of orders by the person being relieved (only those parts of the orders pertinent to the change of command should be read – address, subject, brief of content and signature).
8. The person being relieved orders his/her flag or pennant hauled down. Full honors as appropriate and presentation of his/her flag/pennant.

9. The person relieving reads his/her orders (pertinent parts only), assumes command, orders his/her flag or pennant broken, and receives full honors as appropriate. He/she reports assumption of command to his/her immediate superior, if present, and makes remarks as desired.

10. Master of Ceremonies request all guests to rise and military personnel to remain covered.

11. Departure honors for the official party.

12. Master of Ceremonies announces conclusion of ceremony.

SAMPLE CHECKLIST FOR PROJECT OFFICERS

1. Initial Coordination/Planning

___ Ceremony
Date: _____ Time: _____
Place: _____
Foul Weather Plan: _____

___ Rehearsal
Date: _____ Time: _____
Place: _____
Foul Weather Plan: _____
POC: _____
Phone number: _____
Confirmed: _____
(Date)

___ Guest Speaker:
Host: _____
Requesting letter(s) sent: _____
POC/Aide: _____
Phone number: _____
Confirmed: _____
(Date)

___ Band:
Requesting letter sent: _____
POC: _____
Phone number: _____
Confirmed: _____
(Date)

___ Pre-Ceremony site is:
Requesting letter sent: _____
POC: _____
Phone number: _____
Confirmed: _____
(Date)

___ Reception site is:
Requesting letter sent: _____
POC: _____
Phone number: _____
Confirmed: _____
(Date)

___ (For Retirements Only) Personal Flag for presentation
Ordered: _____
(Date)

___ Guest lists received
Departing Officer: _____
(Date)
Relieving Officer: _____
(Date)

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___ (#) Invitations, R.S.V.P. pre-addressed cards, VIP & General Parking passes
Ordered: _____
(Date)

___ (#) VIP guests is: _____
(#) General guests is: _____
Physically challenged guest considerations:
(Wheelchair assistance, signers, assistance dogs, etc.)

___ Equipment and Transportation

Equipment:

(#) VIP chairs requested: _____
(#) General seating chairs requested: _____
(#) Lecterns with microphones requested: _____
Dais/platform requested: Yes ___ No ___

Transportation:

(#) Sedans with drivers requested: _____
(#) Buses with drivers requested: _____
(#) Shuttle buses with drivers requested: _____

Requesting letter sent: _____

POC: _____

Phone number: _____

Confirmed: _____
(Date)

___ Parking Spaces

(#) VIP spaces requested: _____
(#) General spaces requested: _____

Requesting letter sent: _____

Confirmed: _____
(Date)

___ Program approved.

___ Command Notice .

Draft forwarded for chop: _____
(Date)

Signed on: _____
(Date)

___ Master/Mistress of Ceremony is: _____

Confirmed: _____
(Date)

___ Flag Presenter at Ceremony is: _____

___ (#) Ushers is: _____ . (1 per 50 guests recommended)

Head Escort in Charge: _____

Phone number: _____

2. 3-5 Weeks Prior to Ceremony _____
(Date)

_____ Invitations mailed: _____
(Date)

_____ Programs sent to printers: _____
(Date)

_____ Command Notice distributed: _____
(Date)

3. 1 Week Prior to Ceremony _____
(Date)

_____ Message sent: _____
(Date)

_____ Called to confirm: _____
(Date)

- Ceremony Site: _____
(Name/Phone Number)
- Band: _____
(Name/Phone Number)
- Guest Speaker: _____
(Name/Phone Number)
- Pre-Ceremony Site: _____
(Name/Phone Number)
- Post-Ceremony Site: _____
(Name/Phone Number)
- Equipment & Transportation: _____
(Name/Phone Number)
- Parking: _____
(Name/Phone Number)

_____ **(For Retirements) Personal Flag**
Obtained & folded for presentation: _____
(Date)

4. Information to Discuss or Bring to Rehearsal

- _____ Copy of VIP Guest List.
- _____ Copy of General Guest List.
- _____ Copy of Pre-Ceremony Guest List.
- _____ Copy of VIP Parking Pass (if used).
- _____ Copy of General Parking Pass (if used).
- _____ Name of musical selections chosen.
- _____ Name of State Flag to Honor (Usually home state of Retiree)
- _____ Personal Flag presentation. When?
- _____ Information on Side Boys (Personal friends or Ceremonial Guard)
- _____ Information on other presentation(s)

What: _____
(Certificate of Appreciation for spouse, flowers, etc.)

For whom: _____

Who presents: _____

When during ceremony: _____

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Information on Award.

Type of award: _____

Cheater on it: Yes _____ No _____

Who will provide/place on Dais award table: _____

VIP Seating labels.

Information concerning care for physically challenged guests.

Usher directed seating plan.

End of ceremony car management departure plan.

Name/Number of person to call for foul weather option.

Personnel to Attend Rehearsal

Public Safety/Current Ops.

Flag Aide.

Flag Representative.

Ceremonial Guard Officer, PIC, Gun Crew Leader.

U.S. Navy Band Representative.

Security Representative.

Public Works Representative.

Project Officer.

Master/Mistress of Ceremony.

Personal Flag Presenter (Retirement ceremony only).

Head and All Escorts.

Head and All Ushers.

All Side Boys (If not using Ceremonial Guard Side Boys).

RESPONSIBILITIES OF USHERS/USHERETTES AND ESCORTS

USHERS/USHERETTES

One senior usher/usherette will be designated as coordinator and should:

- Take station at a central location.
- Maintain oversight and control of all other ushers and usherettes.
- Designate usher/usherette responsibilities and assignments.
- Terminate single couple ushering when back-ups occur.

Ushers/usherettes should form a continuing column at the entrance, stepping forward to escort as each preceding guest is escorted away, and should:

- Introduce him/herself to guest.
- Offer and escort ladies with right arm.
- Allow accompanying gentlemen to follow.
- Move guests away from entrance quickly.
- Distribute program when approaching seating area.
- Remind military guests this is a covered ceremony.

Ushers/usherettes should be familiar with VIP seating arrangements and VIP cards, if used.

Ushers and usherettes will escort at a pace comfortable for the lady.

Guests are seated from front to rear excepting designated VIP seating.

If guests still require seating when the Official Party arrives, suspend seating until after honors has been rendered.

Two ushers/usherettes should remain at the entrance area throughout the ceremony to assist late arrivals.

Usher/Usherette seats may be reserved in the last row, if available.

In general, politeness will correct any possibly awkward situation between guests and ushers/usherettes.

The following phases of ushering will apply:

- As guest back-ups occur, suspend single couple escorting (except VIP designates) and escort in groups toward seating areas. Resume single couple escorting when back-ups are reduced.
- Suspend escorting when the Colors are presented and posted. Resume upon completion.
- If large groups arrive simultaneously, post ushers at designated seating areas and direct guests to those posts for seating. This should only occur as start time approaches.

ESCORTS

A designated senior escort will coordinate and assemble remaining escorts in a smart military arrangement in front of the arrival area ten minutes prior to the time guests are expected and escort to pre-reception area.

Escorts will move to hall with covers on immediately prior to the departure of the spouses/guests for the ceremony site. They will not mingle with Official Party.

Timing cued by the escort coordinator and established around the presentation of Colors is generally 15 minutes prior to ceremony – all guests and spouses depart for the ceremony site.

Escorts should be familiar with their designated VIP and:

- Introduce him/herself to guest.
- Offer and escort ladies with right arm.
- Allow accompanying gentlemen to follow.
- Distribute program once outside pre-reception area.
- Remind military guests this is a covered ceremony.

Escorts will walk at a pace comfortable for a lady.

Escorts and ladies will proceed with three to five paces between couples.

If en route to seating area when "To the Colors" is played, escorts shall stop and salute until Colors are posted.

Escorts will be familiar with seating arrangements.

When the ceremony is nearing completion (generally immediately following the benediction) escorts will form a single column to the left of the seating area. After the Official Party has departed, escorts will pick up their designated person.

LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL HAZARDS

1. Following are some lessons learned from previous ceremonies conducted at the Washington Navy Yard and should be of considerable assistance as you plan your ceremony:

- Master of Ceremonies must be prepared to brief the entire sequence of events at the time of the rehearsal. Key items that are also discussed include the guest list to include VIPs, an assigned seating chart, the pre-reception guest list, the sedan list and transportation plan.
- Master of Ceremonies must be in control of events and provide essential cues during the ceremony.
- For seating efficiency, programs should be distributed at entrance.
- A guest list and sample VIP pass, if applicable, should be provided to Security 48 hours before ceremony to facilitate traffic planning.
- Assigned VIP seating should include Vice Admirals and above.
- Name labels should be placed on the metal name holders on the arms of those chairs – if placed on the chair back, it may end up affixed to the guest.
- Recommend guest speakers be limited to one. Keep in mind that your honoree and relieving official, if applicable, will also be giving remarks.
- While considering the ceremony's duration, please convey to the speakers that many shipmates are standing throughout the ceremony, and as much as one hour prior to its commencement.
- To minimize guest discomfort and reduce heat-related difficulties, recommend remarks of each speaker not exceed five minutes.
- Recommend providing bottles of water for guests if hot weather is a factor.

2. Following are some potential hazards which may be avoided:

- Close liaison with the Ceremonial Assistant is imperative. The assigned Project Officer should be conversant with every ceremonial aspect.
- Your draft notice should be "chopped" through chain of command 30 days prior to publication.
- The personal flag for presentation to the retiree should be ordered well in advance. This flag should be pressed and folded prior to the rehearsal.
- Master of Ceremonies and Guest Speaker should thoroughly coordinate the reading of citations, presentations, etc.
- Memoranda requesting ceremonial support should be reviewed a minimum of 45 days in advance of the ceremony.
- As an absolute minimum, one usher should be assigned duty for each 50 guests expected to attend.
- Buses should deliver your command personnel no later than 30 minutes prior to ceremony commencement.
- If flowers (or other mementos) are to be presented to a spouse, or other guests, it should be spelled out in the sequence of events and appropriate ushers/usherettes assigned to deliver them.

- The script for the Master of Ceremonies and each speaker should be detailed enough to enable each one to recognize cues for ceremony events. Orders should be condensed and placed in proper event sequence.
- Need to notify the Ceremonial Guard if Side Boys are required.
- Remember that car alarms must be de-energized. Shock waves caused by the gun salutes will activate them disrupting the ceremony.
- A detailed sedan line-up plan and loading for post-ceremony pick-up should be briefed at the rehearsal.